

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

MINUTES

August 26, 2009

Present: Commissioners: Genevieve Salvatore, Chair, Tessa Marquis, Susan Patrick, John DePalma, Cyrus Settineri

Advisors: Kathy Alagno, Robert Gregory

Press: Frank Juliano, CT Post; Brian McCready, NH Register

Guests: Lou D'Amato, Leo Carroll, Susan Shaw, Richard Platt

- I. Chair Salvatore called the meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Chair Salvatore called for a moment of silence to honor Senator Edward Kennedy who had passed away.
- II. The minutes of the meeting of July 22, 2009 were approved as presented.
- III. Economic Development Report

Mr. Gregory highlighted the news that there was a site selector's tour hosted by UI, there will be a closing on Friday on 120 Bridgeport Avenue which will be a public parking lot, Whole Foods is coming to Milford MarketPlace in November, Aldi's is opening September 2nd, Walnut Beach will have its boardwalk, and there was a nice article in Windcheck magazine.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Kimball Report and Strategic Plan were tabled.

B. Manufacturing Outreach Project

Ms. Marquis said that she had met with the editor of Plant Engineering magazine who said that officially the turnaround in the manufacturing sector has begun. What people have to understand is that even in a turnabout situation there will still be companies that will go down as others go up. He said that one of the good things in the downturn was that the experienced people did not retire so that knowledge transfer to a younger group was possible. He urged companies to take advantage of their older workers

and have them train the younger corps. The Chair asked Ms. Marquis to outline the types of training programs that are or should be undertaken in Connecticut at the September meeting. Ms. Alagno suggested having Gene Laporta from Platt Tech to inform the Commission on the kinds of training they provide. The Chair asked Ms. Alagno to invite him.

C. Neighborhood Preservation

Ms. Patrick reported that the proposed ordinance had been submitted to the Board of Aldermen and they had referred both proposed ordinances to their Ordinance Committee. The Committee meets before the BOA. The next meeting will be September 14th. Chair Salvatore said she would speak for the EDC at the meeting.

D. Shop Local Campaign

The Chair introduced Susan Shaw who gave the report in lieu of Susan Ashelford. Ms. Shaw presented the *Local Proud* campaign, which stresses the importance of shopping at local independent businesses. Her group did a lot of research and culled the best ideas from each project to get what would work for Milford. Some of the benefits included more money reinvested in Milford, more jobs created, more consumer choices, and entrepreneurs thrive.

Ms. Shaw referenced the '10% Shift' campaign in New England. The concept was to shift 10% of existing purchases from non-local businesses to local independents.

She presented a marketing campaign designed by Ann Rubino featuring a stylized "M" that could be customized by each business. The campaign will include in-store banner advertising, print media teaser campaigns and local and national publicity.

A question rose regarding the funding and what vehicle might handle the money. Ms. Shaw thought that the City or a non-profit might do it.

A question was raised regarding the time frame to put it all together for this year. Ms. Shaw responded that she had received positive feedback from a number of businesses and thought that it was possible.

V. Old Business

There was no old business to be considered.

VI. New Business

A. Development Concerns

Chair Salvatore introduced Developer Lou D'Amato and Attorney Leo Carroll.

Mr. D'Amato expressed his concerns with the Planning and Zoning Board and staff. Attorney Carroll cited state and local statutes that refer to economic growth. One of the provisions in Milford's regulations (1.1.6) states "the provision for economic health of the community". He said that economic health should be important especially in this economy.

Mr. D'Amato passed out a list of his 250 tenants. Attorney Carroll said by the nature of his business, small incubator sites, he has tenants come and go. It used to be for small manufacturers but times have changed and they are getting different kinds of businesses. Milford's regulations should allow for these new uses according to Attorney Carroll. Reuse of existing buildings is essential, he said.

Mr. Sulkis joined the meeting.

Discussion evolved to the rejection of a "doggie" day care facility in one of Mr. D'Amato's buildings. The narrowness of the driveway was cited as the reason for denial.

Attorney Carroll said that there are no regulations that allow for adoptive reuse. He said he is asking the Commission for support for the reuse of properties that will allow for economic development. There is an attitude prevalent in PZ board and staff that looks for a reason to say no to project, Carroll said.

Mr. Sulkis said that there were numerous issues listed for denial including a lack of a drainage plan, lack of an updated survey, parking problems and other issues. He said that not every building can be used by the owner anyway he

wants. Good planning calls for the proper use for the proper property. Owners must work within the rules, Sulkis said. The Special Exemption provision is in the regulations to allow for different uses, uses that are not spelled out, Sulkis said. That provision allows for adaptive reuse as regulations adopted in 2004 provide. Mr. Sulkis said that he is supportive of proper uses for appropriate property.

Mr. Settineri said that PZ has replaced the Building Dept. as the major problem in development. He said that especially in these economic times the City must be pro-development while protecting the public interest.

Chair Salvatore said that the EDC does not have the charge to decide individual property disputes. She said that perhaps a forum with City officials and community leaders might be a better way to resolve issues.

Mr. Sulkis said that PZ is not convened strictly for economic development purposes. They are concerned with the health, safety and welfare of the community and are governed by state statutes. Sulkis further explained that economic development is one part of the development picture that the Planning and Zoning Board looks at, although indirectly, by virtue of how they classify land use. State statutes specifically prohibit the Board from taking into consideration the economic circumstances of a particular applicant or application, Sulkis said.

Mr. Sulkis then had to leave for another meeting.

Attorney Carroll took issue with Mr. Sulkis's statements. He said Milford has a Special Exception regulation with no standards.

Chair Salvatore asked Attorney Carroll to provide the EDC with suggested language to change the regulations to provide for adaptive reuse. Attorney Carroll agreed to do so.

The issue of attitude was discussed. Ms. Alagno said she had received at least 25 complaints from businesses regarding this matter.

Ms. Alagno left for another meeting.

Ms. Shaw, a member of the Planning and Zoning Board said it was the Board that made decisions, not staff.

Attorney Carroll stated that he felt the Commission was resistant to supporting one of the City's largest landowners. Chair Salvatore said that was not the case. She invited you to come and has asked for language that the Commission might support just as the EDC has supported other initiatives. All parties agreed to work on a solution.

B. Historic Property

Chair Salvatore said that she had driven by 417 Gulf Street and was concerned. She had taken some pictures, which she distributed, to the Commission members. Mr. Platt, City Historian, was introduced.

Mr. Platt reviewed some of the background of demolition by neglect, current ordinance, proposed ordinance and the history of this property.

The Chair recognized Ms. DiLullo, the Mayor's assistant. She said the Mayor had authorized a building official to inspect the property and reported that a building permit had been issued on August 13th for internal demolition. The building official gave the Mayor a report saying that the work being done was in conformance with the permit.

Discussion continued about 417 Gulf Street, historic properties and their protection.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Robert B. Gregory